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THE TRUMAI INDIANS OF CENTRAL BRAZIL

249 Urucu' is a plant bearing a pod, the
386 interior of which yields a red paint used in body painting and the decoration of artifacts.

244 Bitter manioc was by far the most important crop, while maize and
[24] sweet potatoes ranked second and third, respectively. Most of the crops were planted in the same three-to-four-week period, but the gardener usually planted manioc before the other vegetables. For this purpose, holes were dug at six to ten foot intervals wherever space between the charred logs permitted. A short trench was first dug with a hoe, and then, from the opposite side, an adjacent trench was dug. The loose earth from the second trench was piled into the first, in which the manioc was then planted. Each pair of trenches was made with about fifty hoe strokes.

244 Shoots for planting were obtained by cutting sections from the stalks
242 of old manioc plants. About ten shoots were planted in each hole by thrusting them at an angle into the loose earth. The gardener tried to plant the stems deeply so that the developing tubers would receive maximum moisture. Slipshod gardeners, however, often thrust them in lightly and heaped earth around the stems. The shoots were inserted at slightly different angles to minimize the tangle of stems and thus facilitate the harvesting, but all shoots pointed in a general westerly direction. Quain was told that if they were planted otherwise, the wind would break the growing stalks.

243 The procedure for planting maize was somewhat simpler. The gardener brought a large container of seed corn and a jug of water to the area to be planted. He soaked some of the kernels, and then put them in a small gourd which he carried with him. Small holes, three to four inches deep, were dug with a digging stick (misa) or knife blade in the open spaces between the manioc holes. Into each hole three or four kernels were dropped. A small pile of the loose earth that had just been dug up remained next to the depression in which the corn was planted. This served to trap the early rains. The digging stick and knife were the only implements used in maize planting, whereas only the hoe was used to plant manioc.

244 Men planted manioc; the women were said by the men to "not know
462 how." Indicative of the importance of manioc, the word for planting refers only to manioc planting. Thus, a man who told Quain that he had finished his planting went to his garden the next day to put in sweet potatoes. Similarly, Quain was told that women do not "plant." He soon learned, however, that women could plant other crops, but, with the exception of cotton, it was always done under the supervision of the men.

[24] The most active horticultural role of the women was harvesting. The
[40] wife of the gardener went to his plot to dig up manioc and pink vegetables, which she carried back to the village in a basketry container balanced on her head. If the gardener had no wife, the female relative in his household who prepared his food brought in his crop.

it before it rots. The Trumai worked hard at this, and Quain heard the sounds of women boiling and stirring the *ke'jau* far into the night. Some of the *ke'jau* was placed in gourds for immediate use. It was mixed with water, making a rich yellow drink, and was frequently stirred into the manioc gruel, or *ats aek*. *Ke'jau* was considered an excellent food for canoe trips, and was carried by fishermen and travelers. 262 252

The *pigui* fruit when roasted whole "tastes like egg yolk, or, vaguely, like deviled eggs," Quain wrote. In addition to cooking the pulp of the fruit, the kernel of the *pigui* pit was used. It was sometimes eaten raw, but usually it was cooked. The kernel has a fragrant, coconut-like flavor. A pudding was made by boiling down *pigui* kernels to the consistency of paste and, to Quain, the flavor was much like that of the caramelized coconut sauce prepared in Fiji. Another preparation called *t'ak*, which resembled *beijé*, was made from a flour prepared from *pigui* kernels. Fish and various other foods were piled on top of the *t'ak* and eaten with it, or pieces of the cake were broken off and eaten plain.

Maize, beans, and squash were grown in the Trumai gardens, but due to the season none of these was eaten during Quain's stay. While making house inventories he saw small amounts of maize and beans stored in gourds sealed with tree gum, undoubtedly to be used as seed. Two varieties of maize were eaten. The more common type was called *zolet*; the other was a red species known as *hy kapsik*. 262 [251] [243]

Pineapples and bananas did not figure importantly in the diet. Although the Trumai grew sugar cane (*kanaviya*), there is no information on its use. Sweet potatoes were roasted by the men, but were probably prepared in other ways also. A paste was made from cotton seeds by pounding them in a mortar and then boiling the mashed seeds. The paste was kept in a gourd and eaten by scooping it up with the fingers. [249] [252] [262] [264]

Quain's notes contain little on the preparation of wild foods other than *pigui* fruit. Guava were eaten raw, but there is no information on how the various kinds of palm fruits were prepared. [252]

The abdomen of a large ant called *zokoldomat'ek* was considered a delicacy, and flying ants were popped into the mouth like peanuts. A tremendous green grasshopper with long horns (*tawarero*) was roasted and eaten. A small red tick (*tekou*) was also consumed, but a fuzzy caterpillar known as the *ma'yryr* was looked upon with revulsion. The Trumai claimed contemptuously that only the Suyá ate them. 262 136 252 [186]

It would appear that the Trumai seldom drank plain water. Instead, beverages such as the manioc or *pigui* drinks were used. A gourdful of one of these drinks was usually available in the houses, and a supply was taken on canoe trips. No intoxicating beverages were made, but Quain was told by a former captive of the Yuruna that the Yuruna brew "kills you for a day or two, and they stay up all night shouting and singing." The informant did not approve of its taste or effects. 272 [270] [273]

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Matiwana, who was in charge of the proceedings, was seated somewhere near the center; Maibu, the husband of the sick woman, at one end of the line. Matiwana was chanting while the others merely shouted words at irregular intervals. Each man held a rattle in one hand and a branch with leaves in the other, except for two who held a branch in each hand. Approaching Matavitsa's hammock in succession, and, with arms extended, each stamped on his heels, causing his rattle and leaves to shake, as he moved up and down the length of the sick woman's body several times. This done, he passed the rattle and leaves from her head to her feet, and then clapped the two objects together so as to suggest that he was brushing off something undesirable. He repeated this sequence two to four times, and before taking his seat, he carefully picked up all the leaves that had fallen to the floor.

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While awaiting their turns, the other men rubbed their rattles against their forearms and kept up a steady, disorganized chant. They also smoked, but this apparently was not part of the ceremony.

Turns started at one end of the line and, when the other end was reached, the next series began there. A pause was observed between each series. Some variation was to be noted. One man passed his leaves under Matavitsa's hammock, while another gave special attention to her head. Maibu, during one turn, sucked in the area of her navel.

Quain noted that during the ceremony "there was an amazing lack of affective tension. The men seemed inattentive and disinterested." He was able to ask questions about the ceremony while it was going on, for not everyone participated. Paradoxically, one of the active performers was Oirupa, who was suspected of having brought about Matavitsa's condition through witchcraft.

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The Ole Ceremony

In the Trumai village no ritual was more important or consumed more time than the *ole* (manioc) ceremony.⁵ Its purpose was essentially to insure an abundant manioc crop, and much of the symbolism involved was clearly oriented around the concept of fertility. The supernatural techniques that were employed were practiced almost daily from the middle of August to the end of September. (It will be remembered that planting lasted from mid-September until early October.) The whole ceremony was loosely knit. After it started it reached no special climax,

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⁵ Oberg (1953, p. 56) describes a Kamayurá ceremony which also takes place at the beginning of the rainy season and, in form, closely resembles the Trumai *ole* ritual. He calls it, however, the *Kwuróp*, a "special ceremony in commemoration of the dead," and states that the Kamayurá manioc ceremony was not held during his stay in the field. If the ceremonies observed by Quain in the Trumai village and by Oberg among the Kamayurá are not the same, a great similarity of ritual forms for different religious purposes is indicated.

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746 but continued at the same pace for about three weeks, and then slowly died
243 down. It would be impossible to say on what day the *ole* ceremony ended.

When the *ole* cycle began it consisted of little except songs and dances. These were usually held shortly before daybreak and at night. About a week afterwards decorated posts were erected in the village center. These "*ole* posts" served as "shrines" to which food offerings were made. In the meantime, dancing and singing went on almost every day. On some days two or three *ole* songs and dances were performed; on others there was little activity.

The intensity of the ritual varied with the number of people in the village and according to whim. The participants changed from day to day, and some took part more often than others. Only certain men knew the songs and dances, and they served as leaders. Other men occasionally joined in and performed an accompanying role, while the women followed the dancers and served as a chorus. The usual procedure was for the men to sing and dance their way from the nearby forest into the plaza, where they were joined by the female chorus. They then made the rounds of all the houses, pausing to sing at each.

[424] Only Matiwana and Nitvary served as leaders of the dance processions,
[533] as they had inherited the necessary songs. Makurawa also knew *ole* songs, but his role was always secondary. Nitvary, due to his youth and vigor, was the principal dance leader. Most of the other adult men did not participate in the dances and seemed bored by the activity at times. There was no rule governing female participation in the dance. One of the men initiated the performance without consulting the other men, and the women flocked from their houses of their own will to join the procession, falling in behind the older boys. Quain thought this reflected well the respective roles of the men and women in Trumai culture. Children always followed in the rear and cried out at the beginning and end of each major sequence in the performance.

[424] There were also *ole* songs for solo performance without choral accompaniment, which were not considered to be the special property of
[533] any one man. The soloist made the rounds of all the houses, stopping at each to perform a song and a simple dance. Even the women sang certain *ole* songs, and on one occasion Quain observed two women making the customary rounds together without male accompaniment.

796 Quain mentioned one song as being quite melodious, and stated that
243 there was greater variation of pitch in songs which were distributed
533 throughout the upper Xingú area. The Trumai had borrowed songs heavily from their neighbors, and, in fact, had probably borrowed the whole ceremony. Kamayurá verses were most frequently heard, but there was also a significant sprinkling of Cariban words.

[199] The chorus that followed Matiwana and Nitvary gave only the sketchiest accompaniment. The women did not seem to know the songs,

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but the frequent repetitions and the small number of pitches made accompaniment possible, and their voices fell consistently into the fourth interval below those of the men. The women, however, enjoyed their role thoroughly and gave far better support than the men, who made little effort to coordinate their activities.

The songs were arranged in a series of three verses. Each time a new house was entered, the singer started a new series. Matiwana's songs were more elaborate than Nitvary's. Occasionally the old man would make a mistake and have to start the verse over again, but these lapses merely amused him. The only musical instrument used was the tapir hoof rattle.

Quain gives no detailed information on the dances involved, but apparently they were simple, and perhaps partially improvised. Nitvary was the sole person to take special pains with his toilet before leading a dance. At such a time he usually wore a feather headdress and painted his body ornately.

One of the more important parts of the *ole* ceremony was the complex of activities surrounding the *ole* posts. A few days after the ceremony began several poles were brought into the clearing just outside the village, and the bark was peeled from them. They were rubbed with white clay and painted in colored designs. Each man placed the pole he had decorated upon his shoulders and brought it into the village with shouts and singing. With the poles on their shoulders, they danced about the village, finally placing their burdens upright in holes that had been dug previously in the village plaza. The children helped by packing dirt around them. The women then smeared red *urucu* dye on the bases of the poles and just below the upper ends. Tufts of cotton were put on top by both men and women. An offering in the form of fish on *beijú* was placed in front of the posts. Later in the afternoon, and early every afternoon for the next two weeks, the men ate together among these poles. Their attitude in this ceremonial milieu was certainly not one of special reverence, for they draped two blankets Quain had given them over the posts for shade.

Nearly every day additional food offerings were placed in front of the posts. One post was given special attention. This was Nukekerehe, which was said to be malignant. However, fear of Nukekerehe was mixed with jokes. Quain was told one night that the men would not go to bed until he did, for if he stayed up long Nukekerehe would surely eat him. Weeks later, when the posts were pulled up and brought into the houses of their owners, the man carrying this pole stamped his feet at the children and pretended anger, much to everyone's amusement. On one occasion Matiwana performed a ritual in which he was apparently acting the part of Nukekerehe. He made wrathful noises and jumped about in front of the post, before which were two bowls of manioc soup.

796 He then started a song about the post in which he was joined by Nitvary
243 and the women. After two repetitions, the women poured a bowl of the
522 soup on Matiwana's head and shoulders, making a dripping mess of
him. He retired amid general laughter. The second bowl of soup was
then poured over the pole. A full explanation of the beliefs surrounding
the *ole posta* was not obtained.

796 Due to the fact that Quain had only recently arrived in the village
243 when the ceremony was held, there is also a lack of clarity in the system
608 of relationships known as *ole aton*. The word "*aton*" means "pet" in Trumai,
but in the present context it applies to a temporary ceremonial identification
between people, and between people and the *ole posta*. The
[57] interpersonal ties set up were only between persons of opposite sex.
However, a man could have more than one woman for *aton*, and vice
versa.

Kinship may be the determinant of these ties, but the data are inconclusive. Interestingly, the greatest number of *ole aton* relationships existed between people of the previously mentioned pairs of houses, suggesting a ceremonial reinforcement of this moiety-like arrangement.

Except for reciprocal gift-giving obligations, nothing is known of the behavioral roles called for by these connections. The owners of the *ole posta* were said to have their particular posts for *atons*. Their chief ceremonial duties were to peel and paint the pole, and supply it with food offerings. It may be hypothesized that the posts represent certain
[782] spirits with which individuals are identified, perhaps as the result of
[778] shamanistic experiences, as described by Oberg for the Kamayurá.*

796 During the *ole* ceremony, as during the cure described above, Quain
829 was impressed by the lack of interest in the proceedings. Those who
181 were not part of the immediate activity sat and smoked, indulging in
the usual topics of conversation. The loose patterning and secularity
which characterized the ritual bespoke the general lassitude that permeated all aspects of the culture.

The Piqui Ceremony

796 The *piqui* (*tsinon*) ceremony occurred at the end of the harvest of that
fruit, during the first half of the rainy season. It was similar to the *ole*
celebration, but not as lengthy nor as important. Quain's information on
the festival, obtained from Aloari, is very limited. Jakwanari, the main
functionary, occupied a position similar to that of Matiwana and Nitvary
in the *ole* ceremony. As Aloari phrased it, "Jakwanari had *tsinon* as
aton." There was house-to-house dancing by the women, accompanied
by singing of a certain series of songs. At the end of the dancing Jak-
[262] wanari's wife made a large quantity of *t'ak*, the *piqui* flour cake, which

* *Ibid.*, p. 60.